EMPOWERING THE YOUTH WITH LIFE SKILLS THROUGH

VALUE INTEGRATED EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

India today is facing a "Value Crisis'. Humanity seems to have lost its voice in the face of unending hunger for wealth and pleasure. India was once a blessed land of legendary saints, sages and selfless great men and women. These people were ahead of their times and devoted their lives relentlessly to the cause of welfare of humanity. But today India is known more for corruption, violence, intolerance, crimes against women and other such evils. The 'Value Crisis' threatens to destroy the very foundations of secularism, harmony and love on which our society was built by our ancestors and the holy sages. Lack of respect for human values is said to be the root cause for these evils .The Indian youth lack direction and the life skills to lead a successful and happy life based on ethics. Education can play an important role in imbibing values and morals in our youth. This paper explores ways in which values can be integrated in our education system so that the youth can be empowered with life skills based on strong foundations of moral values and ethics.

KEYWORDS: Life Skills, Moral Values, Value Crisis, Value Integrated Education

INTRODUCTION

Values are the principles that determine an individual's behavior, actions and attitudes. Values influence every aspect of our life, from what we speak, wear, select etc. To how we interpret, react, perceive things and so on. Values are considered as important and desirable attributes of one's character which are held in high esteem by the society in which a person lives. In essence, values determine our moral behavior. Moral behavior is the act that is valued by an observer as right or good (Wayne, Langley, 2011). As Amingo (2003) argues "moral health is manifested in individuals when a person becomes capable of understanding the principles of moral conduct and is committed to behaving morally in his dealings with others".

This paper discusses the meaning of values in the Indian context and its sources of acquisition. It further throws light on the 'Value Crisis' that India is facing today due to the decadence of values in our society. The paper further analyses the grave impact that this crisis can have on the moral fiber of our society. The vital role that education can play in inculcating values and the need for value oriented education is discussed. Further the paper puts forth certain suggestions for inculcating values and life skills in the youth through value integrated education.

INDIAN PERCEPTION OF MORAL VALUES

Values are generally formed on the basis of our personal preferences, choices and desires. When these intensify, they take the shape of our values and become an enduring part of our character. These then become our criteria for our selections, choices, judgments, relationships and our decisions in day to day life and lend strength to our character. These

also determine our approach towards life and how we tend to handle situations. Values inculcate positive attitude and emotional intelligence in a person which aid and guide him in distinguishing between the right and the wrong. This ultimately helps a person in leading a quality life.

In the Indian context values can be categorized corresponding to the three sectors of man's life as:

- **Intellectual-Speculative Values**

The Indian tradition holds no value more impressive than the emphasis laid by it on the pursuit of knowledge. The Indian mind is perpetually oriented towards the attainment of the ultimate goal of life, which is said to be moksha or liberation and knowledge is universally agreed to by the Indian mind to be the main means of the attainment of that goal (Vadekar, 1965).

- **Social-Cultural Values**

The supreme social-cultural traditional values of Indian life have been the values of mutual tolerance, of accommodation and assimilation. These values imbibe values of secularism, humility, benevolence, compassion, courteousness, trustworthiness and respect for others.

- **Moral-Spiritual Values**

India has a long and chequered religious history, in the course of which have emerged diverse faiths, persuasions and cults, which however have lived together, on the whole, in comparative kinship and accommodation with each other. Religion has had a strong impact on our moral and ethical values. Moral values refer to the social aspect of moral character while the spiritual values refer to the personal or the intrinsic aspect of it. The moral-spiritual values hence refer to the character values in the social and personal aspect. The Indian tradition emphasizes that our highest spiritual values (character values for social life) must ultimately merge into our highest spiritual values (character values for intrinsic personal life) invested with a sense of religious holiness and sanctity (Vadekar, 1965). This then represents the highest watermark of the development of our social life. 'Swadharma' or fulfillment of One's duty with the embodiment of moral goodness and spiritual holiness is considered as the supreme traditional Indian moral-spiritual value (Vadekar, 1965). Honesty, responsibility, integrity and self discipline are some of the values associated with 'Swadharma'.

ACQUIRING VALUES

Values acquisition begins quite early in life. According to Herman, a noted psychologist, values are generally acquired in two stages. In the first stage (called the 'transmission approach to values'), values acquisition starts at birth and then extends to childhood. During this time, values one acquires are influenced by socialization within the contexts of home, school, and society. In the second stage (called the 'developmental approach to values'), values are acquired during adolescence and extends on into adulthood. At this time, values acquisition focuses on cognition and individuation (Herman, 2005). During adolescence and adulthood, an individual may re-invent oneself by examining the values already acquired. He then may continue to maintain some of them discard some others and modify still some others (Herman, 2008).

Thus, an individual during his lifetime acquires values from his parents at home, from his teachers and fellow students at school, from his peers at work, from his neighbors, his relatives, friends and several other people around him.

Religion and media also significantly influence the kind of values an individual acquires. The School and Home are important agents through which the child is able to systematically know, learn, and develop the Moral Values (Benjamin, 2012).

VALUE CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT

With advancements in science and technology, the world has witnessed widespread changes in the lifestyles of the human beings. While on one hand, there have been vast improvements in the general living styles, but there has been a degradation of moral values. The advancements in technology and globalization have led to increased interests in materialism and pleasure with little respect for our moral values and traditions. The values that have taken the place of our traditional values are those of indiscipline, dishonesty, intolerance, non cooperation, readiness to steal, cheat and lack of respect for fellow beings. There is growing lack of respect for human dignity and life. Lack of respect for hard work and unrelenting desire to become rich and amass wealth at all costs has led to widespread corruption in all sections of the society. There has been a sharp increase in incidences of violence, murders, thefts, robberies and other criminal activities.

Family values have taken a back seat and even relationships lack integrity and trust. Regular blatant abuses of laws and human rights have become the order of the day.

As depicted in Table 1, the crime rate in India has reached alarming levels. The rich values and traditions that were once the hallmark of our rich heritage seem to have all vanished into oblivion.

The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, won independence for India from the all powerful British Empire, solely on the virtues of truthfulness, tolerance, love and non-violence. He set an example for his fellow beings and the rest of the world to follow.

But on the contrary, as per the statistics collected by the National Crime Records Bureau, the rate of crimes committed have increased manifolds and the Indian social fiber is on the verge of collapse.

Table 1: Crimes in India in 2012

Sr. No.	Crime Heads	Cases Reported
A) Violent Crimes		
1	Murder	34434
2	Attempt To Commit Murder	35138
3	C.H. Not Amounting Murder	3620
4	Rape	24923
5	Kidnapping & Abduction	47592
6	Dacoity	4314
7	Preparation & Assembly For	3099
8	Robbery	27343
9	Riots	74633
10	Arson	11836
11	Dowry Deaths	8233
Total Violent Crimes		**275165**
B) Crime Against Women (Ipc+Sll)		
1	Kidnapping & Abduction of Women & Girls	38262
2	Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty	45351
3	Insult to the Modesty of Women	9173
4	Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives	106527
5	Importation of Girls from foreign Countries	59

Table 1: Contd.,		
Total Crime Against Women (IPC+SLL)		**244270**
C) Economic Crimes		
1	Criminal Breach Of Trust	17901
2	Cheating	94203
3	Counterfeiting	2351
Total Economic Crimes		**114455**
D) Property Crimes		
1	Burglary	92892
2	Theft	337407
Total Property Crimes		**430299**
E) Crimes Against SCS		
Total Crime Against SCS		**33655**
F) Crimes Against STS		
Total Crime Against STS		**5922**
G) Crimes Against Children		
Total Crime Against Children		**38172**
H) Cognizable Crimes Under IPC		
Total Cognizable Crimes Under IPC		**2387188**
I) Cognizable Crimes Under SLL		
Total Cognizable Crimes Under SLL		**3654371**
J) Cognizable Crimes Under IPC + SLL		
Total Cognizable Crimes Under IPC + SLL		**6041559**

Source: Crimes in India 2012, National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs. Retrieved from

http://ncrb.gov.in/

Table 2: Trends of Some Major Crime Heads over the Years 1953-2012

Total Cog. Crimes under IPC		Murder		Rape		Kidnapping & Abduction		Robbery		Riots	
Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence
1953	6,01,964	1953	9,802	1971	2,487	1953	5,261	1953	8,407	1953	20,529
2012	23,87,188	2012	34,434	2012	24,923	2012	47,592	2012	27,343	2012	74,633
Change in 2012 over 1953	296.6%		251.3%		902.1%		804.6%		225.2%		263.5%

Source: Crimes in India 2012, National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs. Retrieved from http://ncrb.gov.in/

The above statistics point to the height of decadence of moral values in our society over the years and the need to stem this dilapidation for the benefit of the human civilization.

While on one hand the lack of values in the youth have led to moral and social problems, on the other hand it has also made them wanting of the necessary life skills required to face the challenges of life confidently, aptly and boldly.

"Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO, 1997). By emphasizing adaptation and a positive orientation, this commonly used definition is consistent with the skills-based, positive approach to youth development (Benson, 2007). The importance of inculcation of life skills has been emphasized globally from time to time. "Life skills are psychosocial and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop the coping and self-management skills needed for a healthy and productive life. Life skills can be applied to actions directed at either the self,

other people, or the local environment; their goal is to promote health and wellbeing at all these levels", (UNICEF, 2002).

Life skills are important for dealing with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Most of the youth lack these skills. As a result they deal with the changes and challenges of life without full knowledge and understanding (NCF, 2005). This makes them vulnerable to risky situations and is the reason behind that a majority of our youth today are inflicted with problems like drug / alcohol addiction, violence and suicides, mental stress, depression, personality disorders, behavioral/emotional disorders, health disorders etc.

In a study conducted among the adolescent girls studying in 12th standard from Hissar and Hyderabad, it was found that 47.5 and 72.5 percent suffered from family stress; financial stress was reported by 60 and 50 percent while 90 and 85 percent of them were suffering from social stress (Dubat et al, 2007). 90.6 percent of the adolescents in the age group of 16 to 19 years have been found to be suffering from academic stress (Sharma and Sidhu, 2011).

The rate of suicides among the young females has been to be found as high as 152 per 1,00,000. The suicide rates among the men have been found to be 69 per 1,00,000. As far as alcohol abuse among the youth is considered, 20.7 percent of males aged 15-24 years were using alcohol alone and 22.2 percent were using alcohol and tobacco together (Kangule et al, 2011).

India is thus experiencing a value crisis which threatens to destroy our priceless ethnicity, legacy and our very existence.

NEED FOR VALUE BASED EDUCATION

With the rapid erosion of values in our youth, we are now facing an imperative need to improve the system. There is a dire need to inculcate moral values and ethics in our children and youth so that they can equip themselves with the vital life skills to face the intricacies of the modern day society.

There has been a quantum growth in the Indian education system since Independence. According to Census, 2011, the literacy rate has grown from 12% in 1947 to 74.04 % in 2011. Literacy is expected to reflect the moral health of our society. On the contrary, the crime rate too has increased exorbitantly since independence as already shown in table 2. This only indicates that modern education system in India has failed to instill moral values in the students. It has thus not been able to produce men of character and integrity. As Gandhi ji said, "By education, I mean all round drawing out of the best in child and man- body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education not even the beginning. It is one of the means whereby men and women can be educated. Literacy itself is no education", (Nandgopal and Sankar, 2011).

The rapid degradation of values calls for a shift in our current mode of imparting education towards imparting Value Based Education with the aim of not just producing literates with knowledge limited to the curriculum but producing knowledgeable youth equipped with life skills built on strong foundations of moral values and ethics. Swami Vivekananda too stressed on the need to inculcate values like self control and self discipline through education. He said, "Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life building, man making and character making assimilation of ideas. Education is the manifestation of divine perfection already existing in man", (Ashrama, 1962).

The Value Crisis facing the country has evoked grave concern from the leaders and the successive governments as

well. Several commissions and committees' setup by the successive governments from time to time have also voiced concern over the erosion of values and have stressed the need for value oriented education that could provide an environment for cultivating moral, social, cultural and national values in the students.

The Committee on Religious and Moral Education (1959) concluded that the gradual fading of the basic principles of religions in the hearts of people was the cause of the erosion of moral values leading to misery, widespread turbulences and disorder.

Dr. Sampoornanad Committee in its report published in 1961 stressed upon the need for value oriented education to inculcate values of nationalism and patriotism among the youth. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) observed that education based on the Indian culture and ethics can alone provide the foundation for the nation's progress, security and welfare. The National Policy on Education (1968) recommended a change in the school curriculum to make education an influential tool to stem the erosion of values and make education more purposeful. The Ramamurthi Committee in 1990 recommended amalgamation of science (truth) and spirituality (unity of life). It expressed concern about the erosion of social and moral values and stated that the goal of education should be to promote welfare of humanity. The Parliamentary Standing Committee in its report in 1999 too cautioned the government on the incessant erosion of values in our society and its grave consequences, if not checked. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT) in 2000 stressed upon the need for inculcating values not only among children, but also among adults.

The recommendations of the various committees, thus suggests that formal education can develop into a major driving force in teaching social values, self-awareness, self-realization and self-evaluation and thus assist in reforming the society.

VALUE EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Taking cognizance of the serious threat that the disappearance of values in the minds of the people poses and the important role that education can play to imbibe moral values in the young, the successive governments of India have taken some steps towards the implementation of Value Integrated Education. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has made Value education mandatory in the schools affiliated to CBSE. In 2013, the CBSE introduced value based questions in classes IX and in the final exams of Classes X and XII also to ensure that the students learn moral values along with their regular studies. The new method has been introduced to provide a strong base for values among children (CBSE, 2012). In this regard, the CBSE has developed a 'Values Education Kit (VEK)' that can be adopted or modified by the educator as per the requirement and need of learners (CBSE, 2012).

Some institutes like Sri Sathya Sai Baba Institute of Higher Learning have been established with the aim to "enable students to not only earn a living but to make them acquire good traits, lead ideal lives, and give them ethical, moral and spiritual strength", (SSIHL, n.d.). The coveted Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata has setup a 'Management Centre for Human Values' which "embodies the striving towards evolving the `Vedantic Ethic' from the Indian deep structure" (IIM, Kolkata, n.d.). It also publishes a research journal on Human values which offers a broad spectrum of holistic perspectives and best practices to deal effectively with uncertainty and ambiguity in complex and culturally diverse environments. S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai has recently commenced a compulsory course titled 'The Science of Spirituality' as part of its executive MBA programme for practicing managers.

To impart and promote spread of human values, a 'National Resource Centre for Value Education (NRCVE)' has been established in the NCERT for school education. Similar centers for education in human Values have been setup in the University Grants Commission (UGC) for Higher Education, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for technical and management courses, and the National Council for Teacher Education. The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi has established a 'National Centre for Value Education in Engineering' to integrate Value Education with Technical Education.

Some of the universities and other educational institutes are now offering degree programs and certificate courses in Value Education and Spirituality. Annamalai University and Vardhman Mahaveer Open University are offering Post graduate Diplomas in Value Education and Spirituality whereas a six month certificate course in Value Education is being offered by Indira Gandhi National Open University. Similar courses are now being offered by some other institutes also.

INCULCATING LIFE SKILLS IN THE YOUTH THROUGH VALUE INTEGRATED EDUCATION

Some of the initiatives (as discussed in the above section) undertaken by the successive Indian governments to promote human values through value oriented education have achieved success but only to a very limited extent. The overall impact at system level has not been very encouraging or visible. Lack of consensual political will and regional, linguistic and socio-economic diversities are some of the reasons that most of the system-wide educational reforms have not been visibly effective.

In view of the grave consequences that degradation of moral values and subsequently lack of life skills in the youth pose to the welfare of the society and the humanity in general, concrete steps need to be taken.

The leaders of the country, cutting across political lines and petty desires to gain political mileage should work together towards promoting human values by themselves setting an example of morality and decency for the country youth to follow. They should be the role models for their countrymen.

The curriculum of the present education system needs to be overhauled. Lessons need to be carefully planned by embedding values in the contents of the textual material taught to the students. These then may be discussed in the class and the students should be made to understand and appreciate them. Values and attitudes should thus become a part and parcel of everyday education. The students should be taught to imbibe these moral values and ethics as Life Skills so that they can face the challenges and realities of life more confidently and aptly. Respect for culture, traditions and heritage of the country should be made an integral part of curriculum transaction. In essence, the curriculum should aim at promoting equity, social justice and secularism.

The teaching and learning process should be more practical and activity oriented. Students should be encouraged to participate in the activities and the discussions. Exploratory learning approach should be followed to instill skills of creativity and innovation in the students and to make them think rationally. Innovative teaching techniques like 'Role Play' should be used to make the lessons more interesting so that the 'Value Education' classes are not taken by the teachers or the students as some extra burden but as something they really look forward to.

Lately, the NCERT and the CBSE have made efforts to introduce teaching of Value Education and Life Skills in the school curriculum. Guidelines and detailed plans for its implementation were drawn with focus on generating awareness, development of relevant material, training the teachers and promoting research and innovation in education of

human values. Guidelines were issued by the CBSE to the schools to devote at least 2 periods per week to life skills. But as far as the implementation of these schemes and guidelines are concerned, the ground realities relate an altogether different story. The subject of Value Education/Life Skills is being taught by teachers not trained for the purpose and who seem to have no interest in it. The teachers are ill trained to assess the students for values and life skills. Thus, it is of vital importance that the teachers should be either trained to teach the subject effectively or skilled teachers capable of teaching it should be employed in the schools.

The most important entity in the process of education is the teacher. The competencies and the character of a teacher are of utmost importance. Thus the system should focus on improved teacher quality for student progress. The education system requires individuals who take the teaching profession as a challenge to produce enlightened students and don't take it to be a profession where their responsibility gets over with the dispersal bell. Benchmarking and standardization of teacher quality is the need of the day.

In-service programs orient a teacher towards updating and enhancing talents and skills. Teacher training needs to be imparted on a continual basis. The curriculum of in-service teacher training programs needs to be made more open-minded and innovative that can create life-long learners and not just teachers. These life-long learners can further mentor the future learners. This is necessary so that the teachers can change and adapt their teaching practices with the changing times.

Each educational institution should draw out a plan on a yearly basis on the stipulated goals of the institution towards imparting Value Oriented Education. The plan should include details about 'what is to be achieved' and 'how it is to be achieved'. Once the goals are set up, the teachers should be motivated to achieve the goals. At the end of the year, through proper feedback the achievements should be assessed.

The parents too have an important role to play in the imparting of values in their wards. The schools should involve the parents in the education of their wards. Their involvement has a positive influence on the academic achievements, values and attitudes of their wards.

CONCLUSIONS

Education can play a vital role in inculcating moral values and ethics in our youth. Core Life Skills, both interpersonal and intra personal Life Skills can be inculcated in the students through Value Integrated Education. Innovative teaching-learning practices that are learner centered and self exploratory should be evolved to sensitize the students on the importance of upholding high values and life skills. This is necessary to prepare the students for citizenship responsibilities and successful careers. The curriculum needs to be embedded with value based lessons. Educational Institutes must impart education that fosters a holistic development of the child not only in cosmetic sense but in real form. For this, they must set up annual goals for imparting Value Integrated Education. Teachers should be well trained to attain these goals. The teachers, parents and the society should together foster the responsibility of bringing about a desirable metamorphosis in the child's personality that makes him 'Fit for Life' and hence capable of serving the humanity and leading a successful life built on the strong foundations of social and moral ethics.

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